



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **House Armed Services Committee**

### **Floyd D. Spence, Chairman**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 10, 2000

**CONTACT:** Maureen Cragin

Ryan Vaart

(202) 225-2539

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE**

#### **FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP OF H.R. 4205**

#### **FY01 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT**

The committee meets this morning to mark up H.R. 4205, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal year 2001. Today's action culminates months of hard work by the subcommittees, panels and members of the committee to determine how best to provide for our national defense during the next fiscal year.

We began this process in February with the best defense budget request this Administration has submitted to the Congress in its 8 years in office. While at the time I welcomed this significant departure from the historical Administration approach on defense, I also cautioned that after ten years of defense cuts, it would take more than one year to climb out of the budget "hole" we are in.

The service chiefs dramatically reinforced this conclusion during their testimony before the Committee when they estimated that just for Fiscal Year 01, the budget request fell short by about \$16 billion in meeting critical unfunded military requirements.

It was against this backdrop that members of this committee went to work and in a bipartisan and determined effort prevailed in once again being able to include a significant defense increase to the Budget Resolution.

Accordingly, this year will mark the fifth year out of the last six in which Congress has chosen to increase the President's defense budget request. The Budget Resolution calls for, and this bill recommends, \$309.9 billion for defense during fiscal year 01 — an addition of \$4.5 billion—, which, if enacted, will result in \$50 billion having been added by Congress to the defense function over the last six years.

Armed with guidance from the military service Chiefs and the additional resources provided by the Budget Resolutions, the committee has been busily engaged in finding bipartisan solutions to the many shortfalls and problems plaguing the military. I believe the series of recommendations that will be put forth today represent a solid attempt to better resource and reprioritize the President's defense program.

I will let each individual subcommittee report on their accomplishments, but suffice it to say that, as in year's past, we have continued to focus on improving quality of life, protecting combat readiness and pushing ahead with badly needed modernization.

(MORE)

The work of this committee has always been characterized by its nonpartisan nature and universal support for protecting our men and women in uniform and their families. This year certainly has been no exception, and I want to commend all members for continuing to strengthen this tradition.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Missouri, the committee's Ranking Democrat, for his support and cooperation in getting us to this point in the process.

I would also like to thank the Subcommittee and Panel Chairmen and Ranking Members for their hard work and dedication. You do all the heavy lifting in fashioning the piece parts that come together at this point into what I believe will be an excellent defense authorization bill.

Finally, let me express my appreciation and that of all members to the staff. The many long hours, nights, weekends that they have dedicated to getting us to this point often go without notice. But, without their professionalism and diligence, we would not be here today.

Before recognizing Mr. Skelton, I would like to make several administrative announcements. First, it is my intention to finish markup today or tonight. Under the best of circumstances, today will be a long day. The committee will almost certainly address issues on which Members have strong feelings so I want to remind everyone to keep the debate substantive and not personal.

In addition, due to the likelihood of record votes on the Floor as well as in here, I urge everyone to promptly return to the markup following Floor votes, the lunch break or any unavoidable absences.

Finally, I have arranged to have lunch and dinner provided for all of us. At an appropriate point in a few hours, I will suspend markup for 30-40 minutes to allow everyone to eat lunch, which will be in the anteroom. However, I plan to promptly reconvene and continue with markup.

At this point, I would now like to recognize the distinguished gentleman from Missouri, the committee's Ranking Democrat, Mr. Skelton for any comments he would like to make.

###